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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR, INTERIOR MINISTER DISCUSS COOPERATION

REF: RABAT 0026

¶1. (U) Summary: Meeting for the first time on January 20, the Ambassador and newly appointed Moroccan Minister of Interior Taieb Cherkaoui (reftel) discussed a broad range of issues. Cherkaoui called relations with the United States "excellent," and he expressed gratitude for the long, rich partnership between the two countries. The Ambassador noted that Morocco has shown clear leadership in various areas and is a model of security cooperation in the region. He added that the United States stands ready and willing to share its experience with judicial reform in constructive ways. End Summary.

Cooperation and Support

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador met newly appointed Moroccan Minister of Interior Taieb Cherkaoui on January 20 for an introductory discussion. MOI Director of Internal Affairs Mohammed Tricha, MOI Director of Foreign Relations and Crisis Management Khalid Zerouali, RSO, D/PolCouns, and LES Political Assistant attended as well.

¶3. (SBU) Cherkaoui called U.S.-Morocco relations "excellent," citing economic cooperation, in particular the Free Trade Agreement, and engagement on security matters, including counterterrorism and the fight against organized crime. He said that U.S. assistance has been instrumental in helping the GOM reduce trafficking in persons and illegal immigration, and has played an important role in the fight against drugs. He thanked the United States for counterterrorism assistance, welcoming ongoing collaboration in fighting extremism and expressing the wish that U.S. support bolster Morocco's role in the region.

¶4. (SBU) Cherkaoui described efforts to advance human rights through legislation and by reinforcing the rule of law for all citizens. He called the MOI a U.S. partner in human rights, citing the annual Human Rights Dialogue and expressing readiness to clarify concerns and continue cooperation in this field.

Judicial Reform

¶5. (SBU) The Ambassador thanked Cherkaoui for his comments, adding that the United States stands ready to work with the GOM in its efforts. He expressed U.S. willingness to assist in judicial reform efforts and to share its experience in constructive ways. Cherkaoui remarked that King Mohammed VI has launched a series of political, human rights and human development reforms, all of which need the support of a powerful, independent judiciary. A former judge, Cherkaoui stressed that the judiciary occupies a crucially important

place in society. He stated that most of the judicial reform vision has been implemented and is achieving its goals. Final results will soon be evident, he said.

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